

QUALITY ASSURANCE ANNUAL REPORT AND WORK PLAN
OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION, QUALITY STAFF
FY2005/2006

Submitted by:
Reggie Cheatham
Director, Quality Staff

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**Quality Assurance Annual Report and Work Plan
Fiscal Years 2005/2006**

1. QUALITY MANAGEMENT RESOURCES

1.1 Personnel Resources

	FTE	
	Actual FY2005	Projected FY2006
Organization=s total filled FTE positions:	15.4	17.5
EPA (and other Federal ¹) FTE involved in the management ² of QA and QC activities	14.4	16.5
EPA (and other Federal ¹) FTE involved in QA and QC technical support activities ³	14.4	16.5
EPA FTE involved in other non-technical ⁴ QA and QC support activities	1.0	1.0
Contractor FTE involved in QA and QC support activities ⁴	0	0
¹ Refers to Federal employees from other agencies who function as QA staff for EPA. ² This accounts for the work of all QA staff to implement the QMP (which was classified in the past as management and technical activities). ³ This accounts for the QA activities performed by the non-QA technical staff, which will be primarily related to projects, but will also include non-project QA activities like receiving QA training. ⁴ Contractors used in lieu of Federal employees to implement the QMP can be counted either as FTE or extramural resources (not both). If you have on-site or a specific number of designated contractors that are used for activities in your QMP (such as QMP/QAPP review, assessments, etc.), count them as FTE. Otherwise, count these resources in Section 1.2.		

1.2 Financial Resources

	Estimates (\$K)	
	Actual FY2005	Projected FY2006
Extramural Resources (not including travel funds or training)	924K	994K
Travel oversight, surveillance, and audits/assessments	94K	150K
Training (including registration fees) and travel for	15K	15K

	Estimates (\$K)	
	Actual FY2005	Projected FY2006
training		

1.3 Adequacy of Resources

The Quality Staff began Fiscal Year 2005 with several vacancies due to being unable to completely fill vacancies from FY 2004. Progress was made during the year to not only fill some positions but also to establish a new team structure for the Quality Staff. The Quality Staff expects to return to full staffing levels in Fiscal Year 2006.

2. TRAINING

2.1 Needs Assessment

Needs for Quality Staff Members. The training needs of the Quality Staff are developed by the individual staff members and documented in Individual Developments Plans. Staff members then search out the training that they need and schedule it to fit into their workload.

Agency QA Training Needs. A needs assessment survey was conducted for the Agency in September 2003. The results of that survey are currently being used to direct priorities for Agency training development.

No needs assessment was conducted in FY05.

2.2 QA and QC Courses Provided and Taken

QA and QC Courses Provided by Organization			
Course Title	Supplier	# Attendees	
		from Org.	from Other Orgs. (identify)
Data Verification and Validation	Quality Staff		29
Interpretation of Monitoring Data	Quality Staff		42
Interpreting Multivariate Data	Quality Staff		35

QA and QC Courses Provided by Organization			
Course Title	Supplier	# Attendees	
		from Org.	from Other Orgs. (identify)
Data Quality Objectives	Quality Staff	1	45
QA Project Plans	Quality Staff	1	31
Overview of the EPA Quality System	Quality Staff	1	51
Assessing Quality Systems	Quality Staff	2	50
QA Training to Support Grants Project Officer Certification	Quality Staff		180 (30 @ 6x's)
QA Training to Support the Targeted Watersheds Initiative	Quality Staff		25
The Quality System as Applied to the Environmental Microbiology Laboratory	Quality Staff	1	64
Internal Audits	Quality Staff		64
Systematic Planning Using the DQO Process	Quality Staff		75
Understanding and Evaluating Data Quality Assessment	Quality Staff		58
Assessing Quality Systems	Quality Staff		49
Data Quality Assessment: Statistical Methods for Practitioners	Quality Staff		45
Interpretation of Monitoring Data	Quality Staff		41
Introduction to Data Quality Objectives	Quality Staff		42
Introduction to QA Project Plans	Quality Staff		32
Planning for Data Collection	Quality Staff		21

QA and QC Courses Provided by Organization			
Course Title	Supplier	# Attendees	
		from Org.	from Other Orgs. (identify)
Quality System As Applied to the Microbiology Lab (Or How To Survive an Assessment/Audit)	Quality Staff		15
Training for Non-Trainers: An Abbreviated Method	Quality Staff		14
Developing QA Project Plans	Quality Staff		15 Office of Pesticide Programs
Conducting Internal QMS Audits	Quality Staff		15

QA and QC Courses Taken by Organization		
Course Title	Supplier	# Attendees (from Org.)
Grants Project Officer	EPA, Office of Grants and Debarment (OGD)	1
Introductory Project Management	Performance Training Solutions	2
How to Communicate with Diplomacy, Tact, and Credibility	OEI Sponsored, American Management Association	3
Managing Emotions in the Workplace	OEI Sponsored, American Management Association	1
Contracting Officer Representative	EPA, Office of Acquisition Management (OAM)	2
Quality Systems Models	OEI, Quality Staff/Annual Conference	1
Performance-Quality Systems Implementation	OEI, Quality Staff/Annual Conference	1
Auditor Competence	OEI, Quality Staff/Annual Conference	1
Sampling Inside, Outside,	OEI, Quality Staff/Annual	1

QA and QC Courses Taken by Organization		
Course Title	Supplier	# Attendees (from Org.)
and Under (VSP, Stat. Analysis for site assessment, Indicator Project)	Conference	
Evaluating Environmental Data Quality	OEI, Quality Staff/Annual Conference	1
Meetings Management Training	OEI Sponsored, Leadership Strategies Institute	1
OMB ICR Training	OMB @ GSA	1

2.3 Other Training Information

The Quality Staff issued the EPA Quality Systems Overview Computer Based Training Module (CBT). Work has begun on the development of the Data Quality Objectives Process CBT.

The Quality Staff provided training on EPA's Information Quality Guidelines to the Regulations Development Workgroup and the Public Involvement Improvement Council; the OEI 5th Annual Environmental National Symposium and the 24th Annual QA Conference.

3. QUALITY SYSTEM-RELATED ACCOMPLISHMENTS

3.1 Innovative Practices

The Quality Staff continues to test approaches for improving the QAARWP reporting format. This year a test is being conducted with several Regions using Agency grants as a test case.

3.2 Revisions to Quality Management Plan

Not applicable. The Quality Staff's roles and responsibilities are defined in EPA Order 5360.1.

3.3 Technical Assessments

The Quality Staff did not conduct any technical assessments in FY 2005.

3.4 Technical Assistance

The Quality Staff operates an open electronic 'Quality Box' to provide technical assistance for both Agency and outside customers. The rate of use for this service averages several per week. All queries are answered within a few days, with follow up as appropriate. The Quality Staff also maintains a Web site that provides access to the public for submitting requests for correction under the Information Quality Act. The Web site lists all requests received and EPA's responses. It also lists frequently asked questions and provides a Web page for third party correspondence.

Quality Assurance Planning Documents			
Type	# of Plans Reviewed	# of Plans Approved (Optional)	Average Time to Approval
Quality Management Plans (or equivalents)	7	3	60 days
QA Project Plans (or equivalents, e.g., Sampling and Analysis Plans, etc.)	0		

Other Technical Assistance	
Organization	Type of Assistance
Region 5 and WI DNR	Assistance with QMPs and QA performance measures in the Environmental Performance Partnership Agreement

3.5 QA Guidance

No QA Guidance documents were issued this year. Several are under OGC review and are awaiting release.

3.6 Publications and Presentations

Johnson, Gary L., "U.S. Adds Guidance to ISO 19011 for Internal and Client Audits, Plus SMEs." *ISO Management Systems* (July-August 2005), International Organization for Standardization, Geneva, Switzerland.

Johnson, Gary L., "Auditing Quality and Environmental Management Systems - a Practitioner's Guide," ASQ Quality Audit Division National Conference, St. Louis, MO (March 2005).

Johnson, Gary L., "Determining the Competence of Auditors," 24th EPA Conference on Managing Environmental Data Quality, San Diego, CA (April 2005).

Johnson, Gary L., and Grace B. Duffy, "ASQ Living Community Model," ASQ World Conference on Quality and Improvement, Seattle, WA (May 2005).

Johnson, Gary L., "EMS Today: Emerging Issues," ASQ Energy & Environmental Division National Conference, San Antonio, TX (September 2005).

Kim Nelson and Reggie Cheatham participated in a hearing to the Subcommittee on Regulatory Affairs (of the House Committee on Government Reform) on "Improving Information Quality in the Federal Government." A report on EPA's implementation of the IQA was provided.

Reggie Cheatham briefed Peter Spencer, House Energy and Commerce Staff on EPA's implementation of the IQGs and administrative processes in place for responding to requests for correction from the public.

Reggie Cheatham delivered presentations on EPA's Quality System and the IQGs at the OEI National Program Manager's meeting; MIT's 10th International Conference on Information Quality, and the 2005 Annual Meeting and Conference of the Organization of Fish and Wildlife Information Managers.

Lisa Doucet gave a presentation on the Information Quality Guidelines at the EPA Web Workgroup Training Conference held this week at the Hotel Washington.

Diann Sims was a guest speaker at the Drug Information Association Conference in Washington, D.C. This conference is the largest and most respected meeting of its type in the pharmaceutical industry and related markets. It brings together leaders from industry and from the scientific, academic, and regulatory communities. Diann also participated on a panel with Food and Drug Administration representatives in a session titled *Various Roles and Implementation Techniques of Quality Systems in Regulatory Agencies*.

3.7 Awards and Recognition

Two members of the staff received Bronze Medals as part of the Forum on Environmental Measurements Lab Competency Plan Review Team. One member received a Bronze Medal from the Office of Research and Development for contribution in implementing the Agency's Science Inventory. One member received the CIO Innovation Award in recognition of outstanding performance implementing the Central Data Exchange (CDX) Lead-Based Paint Certification Program Flow with Online Payments through Pay.gov.

3.8 Other QA Management Accomplishments

INELA Accreditation Process Committee
INELA Program Policy and Structure Committee

INELA Field Activities Committee
 INELA On-Site Assessment Committee
 INELA Quality Systems Committee
 INELA Quality Systems microbiology subcommittee
 Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule 2 tier work group
 Total Coliform Rule tier work group
 FEM Genomics Performance-Based Quality Workgroup
 FEM Method Validation Workgroup
 OGWDW Drinking Water Certification Manual, Microbiology Committee
 Standard Methods for the Examination of Water and Wastewater, Part 9000
 (Microbiology) Coordinator
 US EPA Homeland Security Laboratory Workgroup
 National Coordinating Group, Subgroup on Accreditation, of the Interagency
 Cooperation of Laboratory Networks
 US EPA Performance Based Quality Assurance workgroup of the Genomics Task Force
 US EPA Performance Approach Workgroup of the Agency Forum on Environmental
 Measurements
 US EPA Forum on Environmental Measurements Laboratory Competency Action Team
 OEI Planning Committee for the US EPA Science Forum
 OEI Planning Committee for the 2005 Environmental Information Symposium
 Research and Science Architecture Workgroup
 Peer Review Advisory Workgroup

4. ASSESSMENTS OF QUALITY SYSTEMS

Quality System Assessment Conducted During Current QAARWP Report Period			
Quality System Assessed	Assessor (and Org.)	Date(s)	Findings and Corrective Action Status
American Indian Environmental Office, OW	Thomas Dixon Quality Staff	September 8, 2005	None
Federal Facilities Restoration and Reuse Office, OSWER	Diann Sims Quality Staff	September 13, 2005	One, open
Office of Brownsfields Cleanup and Redevelopment, OSWER	Margo Hunt Quality Staff	September 20, 2005	Three, open
Office of Underground Storage Tanks, OSWER	Thomas Dixon Quality Staff	September 19, 2005	None
Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds, OW	Thomas Dixon Quality Staff	August 2, 2005	None
Region 4	Gary Johnson Quality Staff	June 6, 2005	Three, open
Office of Emergency Management, OSWER	Margo Hunt Quality Staff	July 18, 2005	None

Office of Science and Technology, OW	Vincia Holloman Quality Staff	May 23, 2005	Two, open
Office of Superfund Remediation and Technology Innovation, OSWER	Diann Sims Quality Staff	August 1, 2005	Three, open
Region 1	Patricia Mundy Quality Staff	June 2, 2005	None

Quality Staff has made changes in our assessment program in an effort to improve performance and customer utility. These changes include: internal procedures; customer evaluation form of Quality Staff performance; and updated Corrective Action tracking and assessment closeout procedures.

5. Planned Activities

- 5.1** At the direction of the Quality Information Council, the Quality Staff has taken the lead in a workgroup, with representation from across the Agency, tasked with evaluation and strengthening the current EPA Order 5360.1 for quality. The effort is expected to result in a Quality Policy Directive being issued in FY 2006.
- 5.2** A training needs assessment is scheduled for FY06. Support of the Agency Quality Assurance Training Program is expected to continue at current year levels. Generally, Quality Staff receives more requests for training support than can be met with current staffing resources.
- 5.3** Two conferences are planned for FY 2006:
25th National Conference on Managing Environmental Quality Systems, April 2006;
Annual Quality Systems Training Conference, September 2006
- 5.4** The Quality Staff plans for continuous improvement in EPA's implementation of the IQGs. A pre-dissemination model will be issued for use by organizations across the Agency to guide documentation of information quality procedures that enhance transparency in the information that EPA disseminates. The revised version of EPA's Peer Review Policy contains a new section on the information quality criteria for consideration in conducting peer reviews. The Quality Staff will continue to develop tools and procedures for facilitating the response to requests for correction pursuant to the IQGs, and will conduct training on the IQGs for the Regulations Development Workgroup and other EPA organizations.

Synopsis of EPA's FY 05 IQG Accomplishments

Requests for Correction:

- 7 received (6 were carried over from FY 04)

- 11 completed (one was rescinded because the correction was accomplished under the error correction process)
- 2 carried over to FY 06

Requests for Reconsideration:

- 6 received (1 was carried over from FY 04)
- 5 completed (1 was rescinded)
- 2 carried over to FY 06

EPA organizations affected (OAR, OEI, OPPTS, ORD, OSWER, OW, and R6)

Trends:

- Total number of requests are consistent with FY 03 and FY 04, except we saw an increase in RFRs in FY 05
- Consistency in challenges to types of information/processes (rule-making, peer review, risk assessments, policy decision, data)
- Consistency in requestors (majority of request are received from trade or professional organizations & corporations; 1 government agency/CoC, and 1 private citizen)
FY 05 Annual Report to OMB
- We plan on having the draft report available for review by December 16.

5.5 The Quality Staff expects to review ten Quality Management Plans during FY 2006. These ten plans are a mix of expiring plans and those needing re-approval because of reorganizations or other reasons.

5.6 The Quality Staff has scheduled twelve management assessments for FY 2006:
 OPPTS: OPPT, OPP, OSCP
 ORD: NRMRL, NCER, NERL, NHEERL, NHRSC
 Regions: 2, 3, and 5

5.7 The Quality Staff anticipates continuing participation in OEI and external workgroups. Participation in workgroups is expected to increase as the new Quality Policy Directive is finalized and implementation is undertaken.